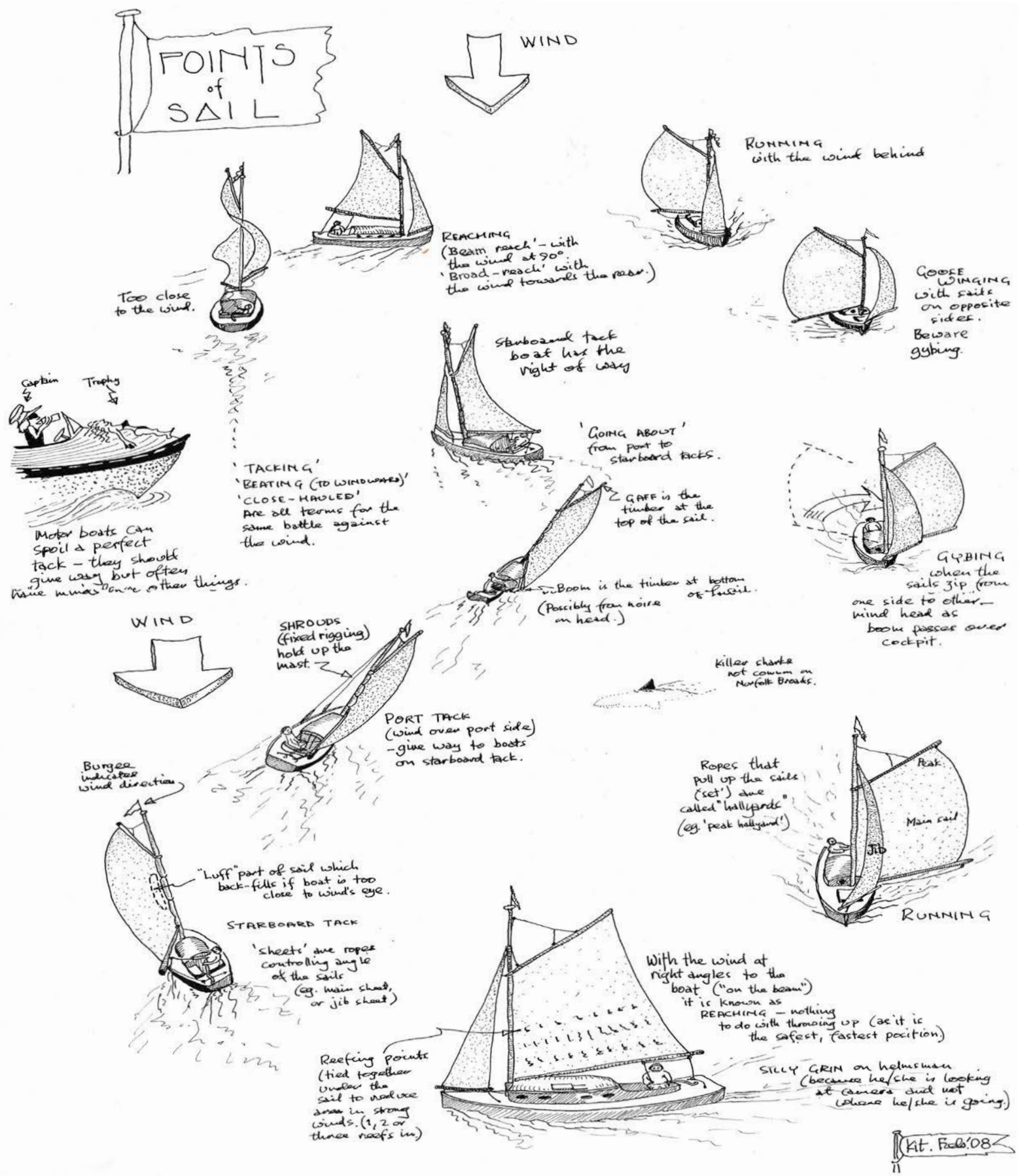
Wood & Water

Step Aboard & Sail Into History



Stories of Sailing, Heritage & the Norfolk Broads
Published by The Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust - Issue 9 Summer 2026

Getting ready to set off

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A simple way to help keep Hunter's Yard, the fleet, and our education work afloat without changing how you shop or spending a penny more

The next edition of Wood & Water will be published at the end of October

All weblinks, emails and information buttons are interactive. Just click.

We welcome comments on our content and design, and would love to hear about your sailing adventures, with Hunter's or further afield. Email us at: editor@huntersyard.com

We encourage you to pass Wood & Water on to anyone that you think might enjoy it, by sending them this link. Thank you. http://eepurl.com/g0u53f

Welcome
from the Editor

Warm sunset at a still and quiet yard - Image by Neil Aitken

There is a quiet pleasure in watching Hunter's Yard come to life once again. As spring gives way to summer, the yards fill with the familiar sounds of preparation: the creak of timber, the gentle tap of a caulking mallet, the rustle of sails being bent on, and the cheerful conversations of volunteers and visitors who share a love of these remarkable boats and the landscape they inhabit.

This issue of *Wood & Water* reflects that same sense of renewal. Within these pages you will find stories that celebrate not only the heritage of the Norfolk Broads but also the people, wildlife and traditions that continue to make this such a special place. From an evening discovering the hidden world of bats at Hunter's Yard to the remarkable story of the Norfolk Punt, we hope there is something to inform, entertain and perhaps even inspire.

One of the great pleasures of editing this journal is the willingness of so many people to share their knowledge, memories and enthusiasm. Whether lifelong supporters of the Trust, first-time visitors or contributors from fellow heritage organisations, each brings a different perspective. Together, they remind us that maritime heritage is not simply about preserving historic boats, but about keeping alive the skills, stories and friendships that surround them.

As always, my sincere thanks go to everyone who has contributed to this issue—our authors, photographers, volunteers and supporters. Their generosity makes Wood & Water possible, and I hope their work encourages others to become involved in preserving the unique heritage of Hunter's Yard and the Norfolk Broads.

I hope you enjoy this summer edition and, wherever you may be reading it, that it brings you a little closer to the timeless charm of Broadland.

With best wishes,

Wood & Water is published three times a year, at the end of February, June and October.

A thought for this issue from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry:
"Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."
Was this Percy Hunter's design philosophy?

SOUTHAMPTON INTERNATIONAL BOAT SHOW

wbta

For the first time, we're off to the show!

At the invitation of the Wooden Boatbuilders' Trade Association, Hunter's Yard / The Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust will be appearing at the Wooden Boat Stage of this year's Southampton International Boat Show.

The brand-new Wooden Boat Stage made its debut last year, so it's a real accolade for us to be invited.

A collaboration of the WBTA, the Boat Building Academy in Lyme Regis (BBA) and Women In Boat Building (WIBB) , daily demonstrations, practical sessions, and expert-led talks and panels will be on the programme.

The stage celebrates traditional craftsmanship and hosts expert talks from a brilliant line-up. Last year's event hosted 68 sessions delivered by 34 organisations, featuring more than 60 individuals.

Titmouse, (below) our Swallows and Amazons star, will be 'sailing' off (on a trailer of course) to appear amongst quite a few wooden boats of all kinds on this prestigious stage which is immediately inside the main entrance to the show.

Wooden Boat Stage Images: SIBS

Bats Abroad

As dusk settles over Hunter's Yard, an evening bat walk uncovers a hidden world of movement and sound, where the Broads come alive in ways rarely seen - or heard

Barbastelle © Damien Brouste (CC BY_NC)

There is something quietly magical about Hunter's Yard after sunset. As daylight fades from the waterways and the last traces of light settle across the marshes, the landscape takes on a different character—softer, quieter, and touched with a sense of mystery that daylight rarely reveals. It was an ideal setting for our Bat Walk on 2nd May, led by Lee and Ginta Rudd of Connected Ecology, joined by their daughter Agata.

For Neil and me, this was our second bat walk at Hunter's Yard, and one we had been eargerly anticipating. Although we had attended a similar event before, we were keen to build on that experience and hoped to uncover more of

WORDS: Louise Hopkinson

the hidden nocturnal world that thrives around the Broads. One of the enduring pleasures of evenings like this is their unpredictability. The weather, the light, the movements of wildlife, and even the atmosphere itself all play a part, ensuring that no two walks are ever quite the same.

We gathered at the yard early in the evening, easing naturally into the occasion over tea, coffee, and generous slices of excellent lemon drizzle cake. Conversation flowed easily, moving between bats, local wildlife, and memories of time spent on the Broads. There was an immediate sense of shared curiosity among the group, with many exchanging stories of sightings along the marshes and waterways. Although rain clouds lingered overhead with a hint of menace, spirits remained high, and as

Common Pipistrelle © Jakob Fahr (CC BY_NC)

dusk approached, we set off along the dyke carrying an impressive selection of electronic bat detectors For many participants, it was their first opportunity to use such equipment and to discover the remarkable soundscape that exists beyond the limits of human hearing.

Above us, an unseen world was already in full motion."

One of the most engaging aspects of the evening was learning how these detectors work and the different ways they reveal bat activity. Lee and Ginta introduced each model, explaining how ultrasonic calls are converted into audible sound and, in some cases, visual data. The Eco Meter Touch Pro proved particularly intuitive, with its touchscreen display and instant species suggestions sparking genuine excitement whenever a bat passed overhead. More advanced devices, such as the Anabat Walkabout and EM3+, demonstrated how calls can be recorded and analysed in fine detail, while the Batbox Duet allowed us to hear the distinctive rhythms and patterns of different species in real time. Together, the detectors transformed what might have seemed a calm, quiet evening beside the water into a busy and dynamic aerial landscape.

The effect was immediate. Almost as soon as we stepped beneath the trees, the detectors crackled into life with the rapid clicks of a soprano pipistrelle. It was an exhilarating start and set the tone for the rest of the walk. What had moments before felt like an ordinary spring evening was suddenly revealed as something far more active, once translated through the technology in our hands.

As we continued along the dyke, Lee explained how bats use echolocation not only for navigation and hunting but also for communication. Some higher-frequency social calls can carry surprisingly detailed information, potentially indicating identity, sex, and even social group. Listening through the detectors gave us a new appreciation of the complexity and sophistication of these often-overlooked mammals, and offered a glimpse into a hidden layer of interaction taking place all around us.

As twilight deepened and the sky shifted from pale silver-blue to richer shades of indigo, more species began to emerge. The detectors picked up the calls of common pipistrelles and noctules passing overhead, while the appearance of a barbastelle—unfamiliar to many of those present—provided one of the evening's highlights.

Walking quietly beside the water, accompanied by the gentle rustle of reeds and the occasional calls of birds settling for the night, created an atmosphere that was at once peaceful and quietly exhilarating. The Broads possess a distinctive beauty at dusk, and the walk offered a chance to experience a side of Hunter's Yard that many visitors rarely encounter. Reflections of the remaining light shimmered across the water, while the silhouettes of traditional yachts stood motionless against the darkening horizon.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the evening was the way it encouraged everyone to slow down and observe their surroundings more closely. During the day, it is easy to move through the landscape with a sense of purpose—sailing, walking, or heading

Low over the water, gone in an instant, the Daubenton's at last

towards a destination. After dark, however, everything feels different. Sounds become more pronounced: the whisper of reeds in the breeze, the splash of a fish breaking the surface, distant bird calls, and the sudden bursts of clicks from bats overhead.

By this stage, the first spots of rain had begun to fall, yet we continued towards the end of the dyke in pursuit of one final objective—a Daubenton's bat skimming low across the water. For a time, everything fell unexpectedly quiet. The detectors ceased their chatter, and we began to wonder whether our luck had run out. Then, without warning, a rapid burst of clicks broke the stillness. Lee carefully swept a torch beam across the water, briefly disturbing a group of roosting geese nearby, but at first nothing was visible. Moments later, perfectly in time with another unmistakable burst of rapid, machine-gun-like clicks from the detectors, a bat flickered into view just above the surface. A Daubenton's at last. It was one of those fleeting encounters that linger long afterwards—a brief but vivid glimpse into a hidden world unfolding around us every night, largely unnoticed.

Not long after, the rain began in earnest and eventually brought the walk to a close. Spirits, however, remained undiminished. We returned indoors for more coffee, more cake, and plenty of animated conversation as participants compared observations and reflected on the evening's discoveries.

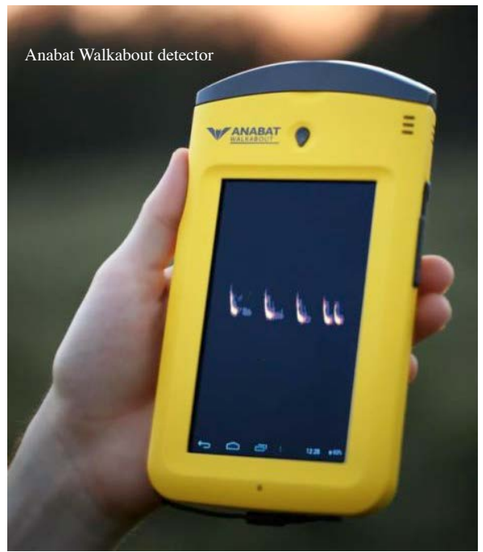
One of the lasting strengths of events such as this lies not only in the wildlife encountered, but in the way they deepen our appreciation of the natural richness that surrounds Hunter's Yard. Many of us have spent countless hours beside these waterways, yet hearing the Broads through bat detectors revealed an entirely different dimension of the landscape—one alive with activity just beyond our senses.

We are very grateful to Lee and Ginta Rudd, together with Agata, for sharing their knowledge, enthusiasm, and patience throughout the evening. Their ability to explain the science clearly, while retaining a genuine sense of wonder, made the experience accessible and engaging for everyone, regardless of prior knowledge.

The walk also reminded us that Hunter's Yard is not only a place of maritime heritage but also an important haven for wildlife, its quiet waterways, reed beds, and mature trees providing ideal conditions for bats and many other species. Despite the rain, the Bat Walk proved to be one of the highlights of this spring's programme, and although Lee and Ginta are unable to return later this year, we are delighted that they hope to join us again next season for another opportunity to explore the Broads after dark.

Words: Louise Hopkinson, Events Secretary, Association of Friends of Hunter's Yard

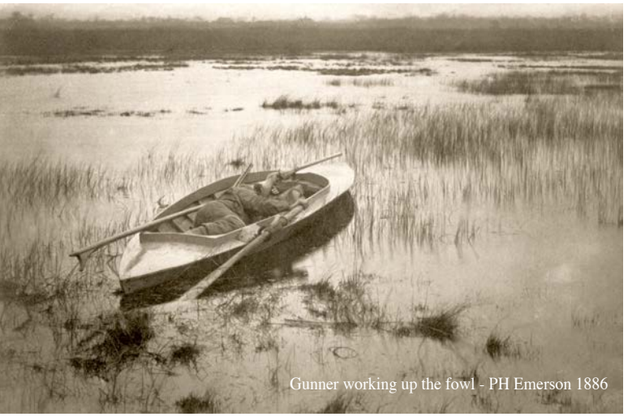
https://huntersyard.co.uk/friends/about/



Anabat Walkabout detector

The Norfolk Punt: From Wildfowling Craft to Broadland Speed Machine

How a working hunting boat became one of Britain's most distinctive racing classes, combining invention, heritage, and startling pace on the Norfolk Broads.


Gunner working up the fowl - PH Emerson 1886

Long, narrow, and astonishingly quick, the Norfolk Punt is one of the most distinctive sailing craft ever to emerge from Britain's inland waters. Born from the practical demands of Victorian wildfowling, it has evolved into a highly refined racing machine that still fascinates sailors more than a century later. Its story is one of ingenuity, craftsmanship, and an intimate bond with the Norfolk Broads.

> "The Norfolk Punt is more than a racing boat—it's a living link between the working Broads of the nineteenth century and the competitive sailing scene of today."

The Norfolk Broads have long encouraged invention. This broad sweep of shallow lakes, winding rivers, and reed-fringed channels in eastern England has shaped the lives of local people for centuries. It is a landscape unlike any other in Britain, and it has given rise to a boating culture all its own.

Among the many craft associated with the Broads, few capture the imagination quite like the Norfolk Punt. Sleek, elegant, and capable of extraordinary speed, today's racing punts bear little resemblance to the working boats that came before them. Yet beneath the modern rigs and high-performance sails lies a heritage stretching back to the Victorian era.

The Norfolk Punt's journey from practical hunting craft to one of Britain's fastest inland racing boats reflects the changing relationship between people and the waterways of Norfolk.

From Marshland Necessity

The Norfolk Punt began not as a sporting vessel, but as a tool for survival and livelihood. In the nineteenth century, the marshes and shallow waters of the Broads were rich in wildfowl, and local hunters needed boats that could move silently through reed beds while remaining steady enough to carry large guns. The answer was the gun punt.

These early craft were long, narrow, and flat-bottomed, designed for extremely shallow water. Their low profile allowed hunters to creep close to flocks without detection, while their stability made them effective firing platforms. Propelled by paddle or quant pole rather than sail, they were simple, practical boats built for a demanding environment.

Local boatbuilders used timber such as oak and elm, materials that were readily available and well suited to the damp conditions of the Broads. Construction was straightforward but effective. Though designed mainly for

Wildfowler checking the result of his work with the punt gun - PH Emerson 1886

function, many of these vessels possessed a quiet grace born of practical craftsmanship.

For decades, the gun punt remained part of life on the Norfolk marshes. But as the Victorian era drew to a close, both social habits and leisure pursuits began to change.

The Rise of Leisure Sailing

By the late nineteenth century, the Norfolk Broads had become increasingly popular with holiday-makers and boating enthusiasts. Improved transport links drew visitors from across Britain, while a growing middle class discovered the pleasures of sailing and cruising.

As commercial wildfowling declined, traditional working boats found new purposes. The gun punt was no exception.

Local sailors and boatbuilders soon realised that the same qualities that made the punt effective for hunting—its narrow beam, shallow draft, and efficient hull—could also make it a fast and exciting sailing craft. Gradually, owners began fitting masts, sails, and simple centreboards to existing punts. These conversions marked the beginning of the Norfolk sailing punt.

The transformation proved remarkably successful. The lightweight hulls were quick in the light and variable winds typical of the Broads. Their ability to travel through shallow water opened up areas inaccessible to many other boats, while their long waterlines offered impressive speed. What began as an experiment soon developed into a new form of sailing.

A Racing Revolution

The early decades of the twentieth century saw a surge in organised sailing across the Broads. Clubs were formed, regattas became more common, and competition drove innovation. The Norfolk Punt quickly moved to the centre of that world.

As racing grew more serious, sailors and designers refined the class. Hulls became lighter and more streamlined. Sail plans grew larger and more sophisticated. Every detail was examined in the pursuit of speed.

Blackbird during the Norfolk Punt Class Athene Cup 2022 © @DEJphotos

A major milestone came in 1926 with the formation of the Norfolk Punt Club at Barton Broad. For the first time, the class had an organisation dedicated solely to its development The club gave the class a focal point and helped nurture its evolution as a competitive racing boat.

Unlike many sailing classes, the Norfolk Punt was never bound by strict one-design rules. Instead, it developed as an open class, giving designers and builders room to experiment. That freedom attracted some of the most talented figures in British boat design, including Uffa Fox, whose ideas helped push performance to new levels. The result was a class that kept evolving while preserving its own unmistakable character.

Engineering for Speed

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Norfolk Punt's history is its relentless pursuit of performance.

Long before many mainstream dinghy classes adopted advanced techniques, Norfolk Punt sailors were testing ideas that would later become commonplace in high-performance sailing.

One of the most significant developments was the introduction of trapeze systems. By allowing crew members to lean out beyond the side of the boat while supported by wires attached to the mast, trapezes dramatically increased righting power and made it possible to carry larger sails safely.

Combined with lightweight hulls and increasingly sophisticated rigs, these innovations transformed the Norfolk Punt into a formidable racing machine. Observers unfamiliar with the class are often surprised by its pace. In favourable conditions, a well-sailed Norfolk Punt can outstrip many modern dinghies and keelboats. Innovation has always been at the heart of the Norfolk Punt. Every generation of sailors has looked for new ways to make a fast boat even faster.

Craftsmanship and Tradition

Despite these technical advances, craftsmanship remains central to the Norfolk Punt's identity.

For much of the class's history, punts were built from wood using traditional methods. Mahogany planking over oak frames became a common approach, producing boats that were strong, beautiful, and fast.

Many of these craft were fine examples of local boatbuilding. Polished timber hulls, carefully shaped spars, and hand-finished fittings reflected the skill of Norfolk's boatyards.

Even as modern materials became available in the second half of the twentieth century, the class retained its connection to tradition. Today, some Norfolk Punts are built with carbon fibre and advanced composites. These boats are lighter, stiffer, and faster than their wooden predecessors. Yet alongside them sail beautifully restored historic punts, preserving a direct link to the class's past. That blend of old and new is one of the class's great strengths.

Racing in the current Era

The modern Norfolk Punt remains a striking sight on Barton Broad and elsewhere on the Norfolk Broads.

Typically around 22 feet long but only four to five feet wide, these boats are instantly recognisable. Their powerful rigs and slender hulls create a dramatic profile that reflects their extraordinary performance.

The class continues to thrive as an open development fleet, encouraging innovation while respecting tradition. New technologies are welcomed, but they exist alongside a deep appreciation for the boats and sailors that shaped the class's history. Racing remains fiercely competitive. Success depends not only on speed, but on tactical judgement, local knowledge, and a feel for the Broads' shifting wind patterns. For many competitors, that combination is part of the appeal. Few classes combine cutting-edge development and living heritage as successfully as the Norfolk Punt.

A Symbol of Broadland Heritage

Today, the Norfolk Punt occupies a special place in the cultural life of the Broads.

Beyond its role as a racing class, it stands as a reminder of the region's maritime traditions. Its evolution reflects broader changes in society—from the working waterways of the Victorian age to the leisure and sporting culture of the modern day.

Enthusiasts continue to restore historic boats, preserving not just individual craft but also the skills and knowledge that shaped them. Regattas and sailing festivals celebrate this heritage, drawing participants and spectators from across the country.

For younger sailors, the class offers a vivid lesson in the relationship between design, environment, and performance. For historians, it provides a fascinating example of how a traditional working craft can evolve into a sophisticated sporting machine.

Above all, the Norfolk Punt remains what it has always been: a boat perfectly suited to its environment.

Enduring Appeal

More than a century after the first sailing punts appeared on the Broads, the class continues to inspire admiration. From silent hunting craft to high-performance racing machine, the Norfolk Punt has travelled a remarkable path while remaining unmistakably true to its origins. Every time a punt slices across Barton Broad under a cloud of sail, it carries echoes of the marshmen, boatbuilders, and sailors who shaped its story.

In an age of standardised production and global design, the Norfolk Punt remains proudly distinctive—a true Broadland original. More than a racing class, it is a living expression of the ingenuity, craftsmanship, and competitive spirit that have characterised the Norfolk Broads for well over a century.

This is the first of a series of articles featuring some of Broadland's unique sailing craft

Norfolk Punt Club: https://puntclub.co.uk/about/

The Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust at Hunter's Yard

Our Charity

Preservation of the fleet

Youth sailing programmes

Heritage skills development

Supported by the Friends of Hunters Yard

The Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust, Hunter's Yard

Sailing on the Norfolk Broads

Learn To Sail (RYA Courses)

Skippered Sails

Discounted Youth Sailing

Heritage Sailing Boat Hire

With a wide range of options, Hunter's Yard has something for everyone, from the most experienced sailor looking for a new challenge, to the most inexperienced beginner or non-sailor, families and youth groups.

As well as being able to hire one of our fleet of magnificent boats, with special offers available for families or under 25s, our expert instructors offer certified RYA training courses, alongside a Cabin Yacht Conversion course and 'Learn to Sail' holidays leading to an RYA qualification.

If you would prefer someone else to take charge, our Skippered Sails are ideal, letting you try your hand at sailing or just sit back and enjoy the view in the safe hands of one of our experienced skippers for 2hrs, 4hrs or a full day on this magical waterland – the Norfolk Broads. Bring up to 5 family and friends – and the dog.

Enjoy the beauty of the Broads National Park from as little as £25 per head.

20% Family sailing discount during July and August
(one member under 18 yrs)

20% Under 25s discount all season
(all crew members under 25yrs

Find out more - Sailing Courses

Find out more - Holidays

Caring for Heritage Inspiring Adventure

Are you searching for an unforgettable sailing experience that blends nostalgia with adventure? If so, hiring a classic Broads yacht from Hunter's Yard in Ludham, Norfolk, could be the perfect escape.

Step into a bygone era - Sailing on a beautifully preserved yacht from the 1930s, where every curve and polished wooden finish tells a story of a simpler time. The elegance and charm of these classic vessels transport you back to an era when life moved more slowly and every moment was savoured. These aren't just boats; they're time machines, connecting you o the rich history and traditions of sailing on the enchanting Norfolk Broads.

An Exceptional Sailing Experience - Sailing a classic boat isn't about rushing to a destination; it's about the journey itself. These stunning vessels deliver a thrill modern boats often can't match. Feel the breeze fill the sails as you glide effortlessly across the water, accompanied by bird song and the gentle lap of the Broads. Whether you're an experienced sailor or a curious beginner, the joy of mastering these yachts is truly unmatched. Few things rival the satisfaction of harnessing the wind and steering through such picturesque waterways.

Embrace Waterborne Camping - Like the idea of camping but want something a little more magical? Waterborne camping offers a unique twist. Wake up surrounded by natural beauty, with the soft movement of water as your alarm. These classic boats feature cozy sleeping quarters and all the essentials for a comfortable stay. Spend your days exploring scenic landscapes and charming villages, then relax on deck in the evening beneath a canopy of stars.

Create Unforgettable Memories - Hiring a Broads yacht from Hunter's Yard is more than a holiday - it's a chance to make lasting memories with family and friends. Whether you're celebrating a special occasion or escaping the daily grind, time on the water brings people together. From laughter-filled days of exploration to peaceful sunsets and quiet conversations, these moments become treasured memories.

Explore the Wonders of the Broads - The Norfolk Broads are a natural jewel, with tranquil waterways winding through lush landscapes and storybook villages. Your classic yacht gives you the freedom to explore at your own pace. Visit welcoming pubs, browse local markets, or drop anchor for a waterside picnic. Every stop reveals more of the Broads' unique beauty and character.

Expertise and Support - At Hunter's Yard, you're not just hiring a yacht - you're joining a community of passionate sailors. The friendly, knowledgeable team is always on hand to help, offering route suggestions, practical advice, and reassurance for first-time sailors, ensuring your journey is smooth and enjoyable.

Conclusion - ***If you're looking for a truly distinctive getaway that blends adventure, relaxation, and timeless charm, hiring a classic Broads yacht from Hunter's Yard in Ludham, Norfolk, is the answer.***

With skippered sailing, boat rental, and courses of all kinds, connect with nature, slow down, and relax the joy of sailing.

Our cover story

Kit Ellis is an old friend of Hunter's Yard. *Lines and Logs*, our splendid book celebrating the first 25 years of the Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust in 2021 recounts, in wonderful detail, some of the voyages and adventures from Hunter's Yard in our lovely boats.

The very first entry is the log of the maiden voyage of our first yacht, Lullaby, in the hands of the Bray family, casting off on Saturday May 14th 1933. It really was a maiden voyage as Lullaby had not even had a test sail!

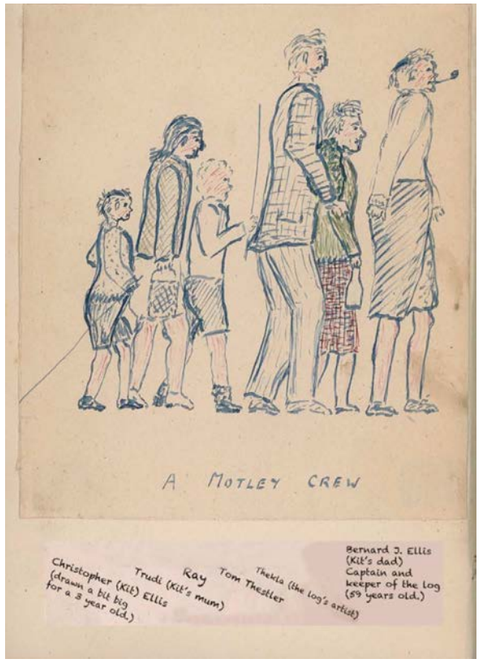
Lullaby was again the yacht of choice when *"A motley crew"* assembled to take her out during June 1945. Kit was only 3 at the time and the entire log, including many sketches and photos tells of a wonderful week, though at one point *'Christopher (Kit) then enlived the proceedings by falling overboard into a wet mudbank, and being rescued with speed and violence by Trudi"* (Kits mother).

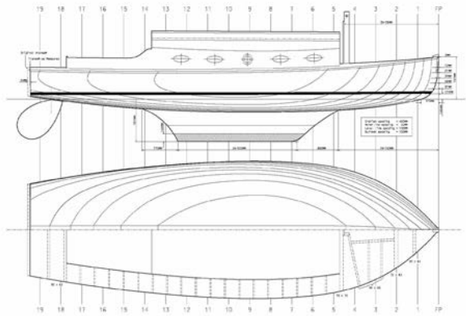
Cooking was then a slightly more complex issue than simply 'turning on the gas'. For those who remember them, the pump-up paraffin-fueled Primus stoves were sometimes idiosyncratic to get going but once lit, gave off the most reassuring hiss.

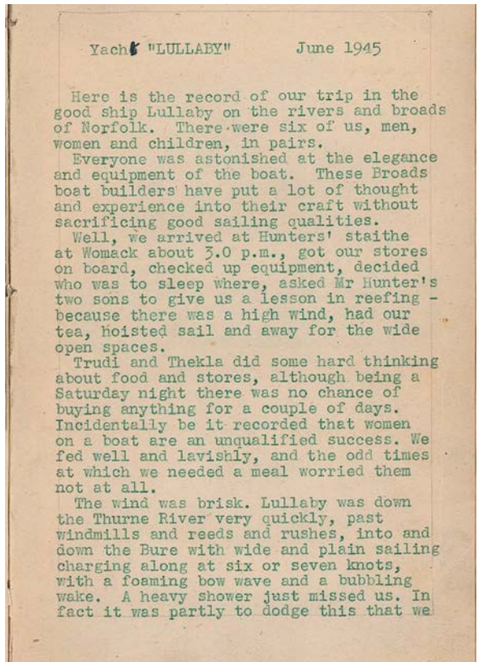
*"The Motley Crew"*or some part of it returned again and again to Hunter's Yard (as so many have done over the decades) each time enjoying the 'something extraordinary' about the fleet and the yard. *Unique and wonderful*

Over the years Kit has provided many sketches, including our cover image.

"Logs and Lines" is a fascinating insight into sailing our boats on the Broads and is packed with photos and sketches, together with the history of Hunter's Yard and technical information about the yachts themselves.







Yacht "LULLABY" June 1945

Here is the record of our trip in the good ship Lullaby on the rivers and broads of Norfolk. There were six of us, men, women and children, in pairs.

Everyone was astonished at the elegance and equipment of the boat. These Broads boat builders have put a lot of thought and experience into their craft without sacrificing good sailing qualities.

Well, we arrived at Hunters' staithe at Womack about 3.0 p.m., got our stores on board, checked up equipment, decided who was to sleep where, asked Mr Hunter's two sons to give us a lesson in reefing - because there was a high wind, had our tea, hoisted sail and away for the wide open spaces.

Trudi and Thekla did some hard thinking about food and stores, although being a Saturday night there was no chance of buying anything for a couple of days. Incidentally be it recorded that women on a boat are an unqualified success. We fed well and lavishly, and the odd times at which we needed a meal worried them not at all.

The wind was brisk. Lullaby was down the Thurne River very quickly, past windmills and reeds and rushes, into and down the Bure with wide and plain sailing charging along at six or seven knots, with a foaming bow wave and a bubbling wake. A heavy shower just missed us. In fact it was partly to dodge this that we

Horning Sailing Club and the Enduring Challenge of the Three Rivers Race

Nestled on the banks of the River Bure, Horning Sailing Club occupies a special place in the history of sailing on the Norfolk Broads. Although organised sailing in Horning dates back to 1910, when one of the area's earliest sailing clubs was established, the club as we know it today emerged in 1938 following the re-organisation of several local clubs. From an initial membership of 244, it has grown into one of the largest and most active sailing clubs on the Broads, combining a busy racing programme with training, social events and a warm welcome for visitors and newcomers alike.

The club's racing calendar reflects the rich heritage of Broads sailing. Traditional classes such as the Reedling, Rebel, Yare & Bure One Design and Yeoman continue to compete alongside cruisers and allcomers under handicap. Racing takes place on the river at Horning, across Hoveton Little Broad and further afield towards Thurne. Throughout the summer, the club also provides sailing and powerboat instruction, helping to introduce new generations to life on the water.

Yet if Horning Sailing Club is known for one event above all others, it is the Three Rivers Race. First held in June 1961, the race has become one of the defining fixtures of the Broads sailing calendar and is widely regarded as one of the largest inland yacht races in Europe. Each year, competitors set out on a demanding course that takes in the rivers Bure, Thurne and Ant, together with South Walsham Broad and Hickling Broad. The challenge is not simply one of distance. Sailors must contend with shifting winds, changing tides, darkness and the peculiar demands of Broads navigation.

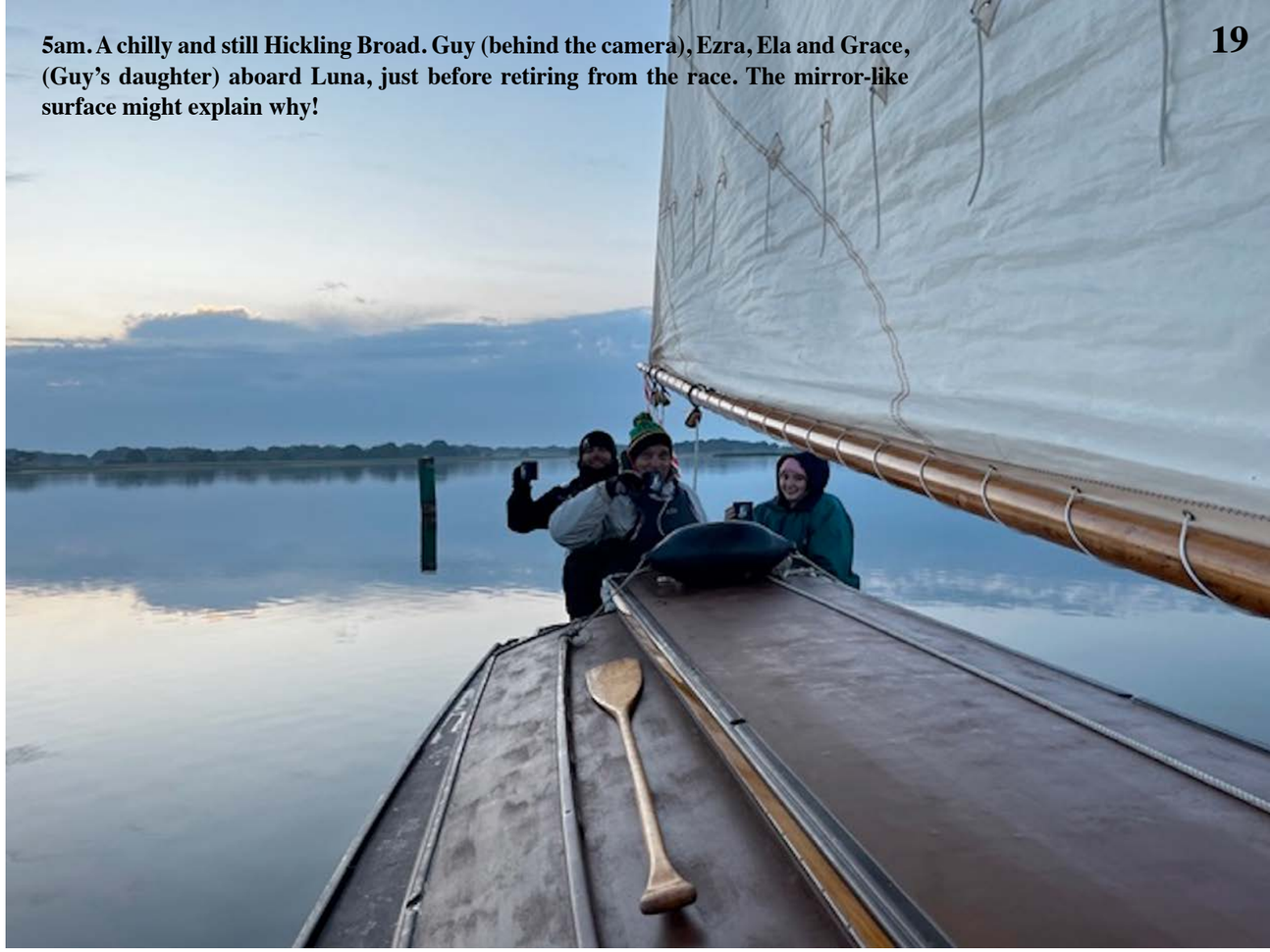
The inaugural race provided an early indication of the event's character. Forty-two boats started in a lively breeze on 16 June 1961, only for conditions to deteriorate into gale-force winds overnight. The first boat home was the Yare & Bure One Design Brimstone, helmed by Hugh Tusting, who reportedly had to wake the sleeping race officer to obtain a finishing bell.

More than six decades later, the race remains every bit as memorable for those who take part.

For spectators, the start at Horning is one of the highlights. Boats gather upstream of the club in groups, waiting for their allotted start times before setting off in a colourful procession that can take more than an hour to unfold. Once the fleet reaches Thurne Mouth, crews face a crucial tactical decision: whether to head towards Hickling or continue down river. Wind strength, tide and boat performance all play a part in determining the best route.

Bridges form another distinctive element of the race. At Potter Heigham and Acle, crews must lower their masts to pass beneath the arches, a manoeuvre known as "shooting the bridge". These locations provide excellent vantage points for spectators and often become focal points of drama as boats queue, manoeuvre and race against the tide.

As daylight fades, the race enters perhaps its most evocative phase. The Broads become quieter, the wind often softens and navigation lights begin to flicker along the waterways. Sailors who have missed a favourable tide may find themselves facing a long night. The distant boom of bitterns echoes across the reedbeds, while bends in the river emerge from the darkness with only the faintest outline. At such moments, the race becomes as much a test of judgement and endurance as of sailing skill.



5am. A chilly and still Hickling Broad. Guy (behind the camera), Ezra, Ela and Grace, (Guy's daughter) aboard Luna, just before retiring from the race. The mirror-like surface might explain why!

This year's race report from, Stuart Bailey, sailing the Reedling, Jaws, illustrates these challenges perfectly. After a one-hour postponement caused by light winds and a strong adverse tide, they crossed the start line shortly after midday. Progress through the fleet was initially slow, but conditions improved beyond Ant Mouth and they were first to reach the mark below Ludham Bridge. South Walsham followed, although the passage through Fleet Dyke was frustratingly calm.

Better sailing awaited on the River Bure, where a strengthening sea breeze carried them swiftly towards Acle and the Stokesby mark.

By evening they were heading back towards Hickling Broad. The setting sun cast long shadows across the water, creating what they described as a magical atmosphere. Unfortunately, the wind faded once again. Hickling became a mirror-like expanse, and progress was painfully slow. Having eventually rounded the final Mouth before a freshening breeze finally carried them home.

Crossing the finish line at 9.15 the following morning, they were seventh boat home. Yet under the handicap system their final placing dropped to fortieth. Such outcomes are accepted as part of the race's unique character. What mattered most was completing another Three Rivers Race and sharing a well-earned cooked breakfast back at Horning Sailing Club, where competitors exchanged stories of the previous twenty-one hours on the water.

It is perhaps this combination of challenge, tradition and camaraderie that explains the race's enduring appeal. Many sailors finish exhausted and swear they will never enter again. Yet when entries open the following January, they invariably find themselves signing up once more. The Three Rivers Race has a habit of doing that.

As a sad endnote, none of the Hunter's Yard entries managed to finish within the time allowed, but were in good company.

Small Gifts. Big Waves
Hunter's Yard has changed lives since 1968.

Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust

HUNTER'S YARD

As a charity, the Trust depends entirely on donations, legacy gifts, grants, and fleet hire income. Every contribution drives its mission forward.

When Norfolk County Council began running the yard in 1968 for Norfolk schoolchildren, it embodied the then Director of Education's belief: "The purpose of education is to turn 'I cannot' into 'I can.'" Some skipper instructors sailing with school parties today learnt to sail then - proof of that vision's lasting value.

The NHFT was founded on a powerful principle: education happens beyond classrooms. Through sailing and practical skills, young people gain self-confidence, independence, and joy on the water that stays with them for life.

For nearly 30 years, the Trust has quietly transformed young lives. For many, it's been their first time away from home, their first challenge overcome, their first real belief that they CAN succeed.

Youth groups have long received generous discounts, allowing schools, scouts, guides, and community groups to access this life-changing experience. But rising costs and growing demand mean goodwill alone isn't enough. A sustainable bursary fund is now essential.

This is where supporters play a vital role. The Trust secures the future Hunter's Yard so young people from all backgrounds can benefit. At its heart is a dedicated bursary fund - turning discounts into reliable, long-term support.
Hunter's Happy Hundred - 100 people giving £10 monthly. That's it.

These small gifts create a reliable fund helping young people who need it most take part, belong, and grow in confidence. For less than many spend on coffee or streaming monthly, you can change young lives. No prizes. No gimmicks. Just impact.

Your £10 each month keeps Hunter's Yard open and ready for the next generation.
Leave a Lasting Legacy - Regular gifts sustain us today. Legacy gifts secure tomorrow.

A gift in your will - any size - protects Hunter's Yard for years to come, maintaining boats, facilities, and bursaries so young people can discover what they're capable of. Many supporters find comfort knowing their values live on through lives they help shape.

Small Gifts. Big Waves - Hunter's Yard has changed lives since 1968.

With your support - monthly, one-off, or legacy - it can continue for decades.

Every Gift Matters

By joining Hunter's Happy Hundred or remembering the Trust in your will, you help future generations step aboard with confidence and say, "I can".

HELP US BUILD A BURSARY

100 HUNTER'S HAPPY HUNDRED

'The purpose of education is to turn 'I cannot' into 'I can.''
– Dr. (Sir) Lincoln Ralphs, Director of Education, Norfolk (1960s)

For generations, Hunter's Yard has helped young people discover confidence, teamwork, and the joy of sailing the Norfolk Broads

For over 50 years, youth groups have received a 30% discount — but now, we need your help to turn that 'bursary' into a real fund that can keep this tradition afloat.

We're looking for

100 friends to give £10 a month

Together, we'll build a bursary that lets even more young people get afloat, learn life skills, and carry on a legacy that began in 1968.

No prizes. No gimmicks. Just the knowledge that you're helping the next generation say,

'I can.'

JOIN THE HUNTER'S HAPPY HUNDRED
SMALL GIFTS, BIG WAVES

Please email hh100@nhftrust.org.uk to find out more

Our Big Picture - Three Rivers Race, 9pm. Hustler 4 heading to Potter Heigham Bridge. Image: Ezra Bailey

Gli Gli Canoe Project

Gli Gli at Trelliss Bay - Ela Keegan

Growing up in the British Virgin Islands, I spent my childhood climbing on boats and playing along the shoreline of Trellis Bay. Among them was Gli Gli, a traditional Kalinago canoe whose extraordinary voyage helped reconnect Indigenous communities across the Caribbean. Today, as restoration work brings the vessel back to life, it raises a larger question: how can the region's maritime traditions be preserved for future generations?

Words: Ela Keegan

As a child, the ocean shaped my daily life, identity, and imagination. I grew up on Tortola, the largest island in the British Virgin Islands (BVI). Both of my parents are originally from the UK: my mother was a sailor and my father a windsurf instructor. Much of my childhood was spent around boats and beaches, where life revolved around being on or in the water.

Social gatherings often centred on adults chatting over a beer while children were left to roam freely along the shoreline. One of my favourite events was the monthly full moon party at Trellis Bay. BVI artist Aragorn Dick-Read would set his metal sculptures ablaze from within, filling them with wood before nightfall as music played and Moko Jumbies danced among the crowds. As a child, however, I was far more interested in finding the best things to climb.

The coastline was scattered with boats, trees, and curious structures, but one vessel stood out above all the others. *Gli Gli* was a wooden dugout canoe painted with bold geometric swirls in bright yellow and red. Even then, it seemed to belong to another world.

In the mid-1990s, a chance meeting between Aragorn Dick-Read and Dominican Kalinago artist Jacob Frederick sparked an extraordinary cultural journey. The Kalinago people, often historically referred to as the Caribs, are the Indigenous peoples of the Lesser Antilles. Long before European colonisation, their seafaring traditions, craftsmanship, and intimate knowledge of the sea helped shape the culture of the Caribbean.

Today, despite centuries of displacement and cultural loss, Kalinago communities continue to preserve and celebrate their heritage through language, storytelling, music, and craft.

Named Gli Gli, after the sparrow hawk, the canoe became the largest vessel of its kind built in Dominica in living memory

Together, Dick-Read and Frederick launched the *Gli Gli* Carib Canoe Project, an ambitious effort to revive Indigenous canoe-building traditions and reconnect Caribbean Indigenous communities through a symbolic sea voyage. Using ancestral methods and locally sourced materials, master canoe builder Etien "Chalo" Charles led the construction of a 35-foot dugout canoe carved from massive gommier trees deep within Dominica's rainforest. Named *Gli Gli,* after the sparrow hawk, the canoe became the largest vessel of its kind built in Dominica in living memory.

In 1997, *Gli Gli* embarked on a landmark voyage from Dominica to Guyana, retracing the ancestral migration routes of the Kalinago people from South America through the Caribbean islands. Along the way, the crew visited Indigenous communities, shared music and craft traditions, and helped reignite awareness of the Caribbean's surviving Indigenous heritage.

More than an expedition, the project became a celebration of identity, resilience, and regional connection — a reminder that boats can carry culture just as much as people.

Gli Gli sailing in Trellis Bay 2009 - SV Footprint blog

Today, *Gli Gli* rests on the beach outside Aragorn's studio in Trellis Bay. Time, weather, and years ashore have taken their toll, and the canoe is now in urgent need of repair before she can return to the sea.

The Caribbean has never been defined by a single kind of boat. Each island developed its own vessels, shaped by its waters, livelihoods, and traditions

During the few months I spent back home over the winter, I volunteered to help with the restoration. One of our first jobs was to document the canoe's structure, mapping the positions of the tachetes (ribs), corbes (floors), and cleats within the hull. We then began removing damaged sections, including the planking fastened to the top of the dugout hull itself.

Soon after, we set about replacing one of *Gli Gli's* ribs. The task took us into Tortola's bush with machetes and chainsaws in search of a suitable white cedar tree. Eventually, we found a branch with the right natural curve to match the original timber. After clearing the surrounding vegetation, we cut it free and carried it back to the workshop.

With the bark stripped away and the rough shape marked out, the new rib slowly emerged beneath the swing of a machete. Guided by the original piece, it was shaped carefully by hand until it matched the canoe's lines.

Over the coming months, more ribs and floors will be replaced, along with the planking attached to the dugout hull. The hull itself will undergo patch repairs before the canoe is reassembled with new cleats, oars, and rigging, ready once again for the water.
Working on *Gli Gli* made me realise that preserving a canoe is also a way of preserving the knowledge, skills, and stories that built it. What inspired me most was not simply the restoration of a single vessel, but the possibility of what projects like this could mean for the future of Tortola and the wider Caribbean.

For many visitors arriving in the region during the charter boom, it would have been easy to assume that gleaming fleets of GRP yachts represented Caribbean sailing culture. Yet the Caribbean has never been defined by a single kind of boat. Each island developed its own vessels, shaped by its waters, livelihoods, and traditions: the yoles of Martinique, the pirogues of Trinidad, and the famous Tortola sloops of the British Virgin Islands.

One of the finest celebrations of this heritage can be found in Clean Sweet Wind and Plenty of It: Sailing with the Last of the Caribbean Boatbuilders. Its pages reveal a maritime culture that is both remarkably diverse and deeply rooted in local communities.
I would love to see wooden boats return to Caribbean shores in greater numbers — not as museum pieces, but as living vessels. Boats that are sailed, maintained, and understood by young people learning the traditions of their own islands.
Seeing the work being done here at Hunter's Yard, alongside programmes such as Project Starfish that introduce young people to traditional sailing and boatbuilding, gives me hope that something similar could one day exist back home in the British Virgin Islands.

If *Gli Gli* returns to the sea, she will do more than sail again. She will carry forward a story of cultural resilience, craftsmanship, and connection — proof that the boats of the Caribbean still have lessons to teach the generations that follow.

Words: Ela Keegan, Schools, Youth and Communities Co-ordinator, Hunter's Fleet Ltd & The Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust

The Maritime Heritage Trust

...a window into the past, worth preserving for the future

The Maritime Heritage Trust aims to make more people aware of, care for and share our rich maritime heritage in all its dimensions– physical, cultural, social and environmental. It always seems bizarre and unsettling that with one of the longest coastlines in Europe, the UK has lost its connections with "the sea" more extensively than our neighbours. The MHT is here to try and keep this small and fragile flame alive.
You will see a 'membership based' organisation, that

Dinghies are "historic" too, as "International 14s" show.(Photo John Evans)

has emerged from a nearly 70 year process, with some very distinguished supporters over the year. Out of this process came the National Historic Ships Register, the (late) Queen's Jubilee Barge, and the revival and creation of the new Cutty Sark berth in Greenwich. "Heritage" has changed dramatically in this time, and the MHT now operates in a crowded place, but is doing well, via donations and new initiatives.

The UK is slowly catching up with the growing global recognition that we have a shared "maritime heritage; built heritage, lighthouses, ports, ships, wrecks, underwater archaeological discoveries, traditions and songs, knowledge and legends and maritime cultural heritage are a reflection of our history and our identities; we should be careful of this breadth and richness through preservation, conservation and restoration and with as many as possible" (Maritime Cultural Heritage Manifesto, Brest, February 2022, an input to the UN Oceans Conference, Lisbon June 2022). The MHT is trying to live up to this.

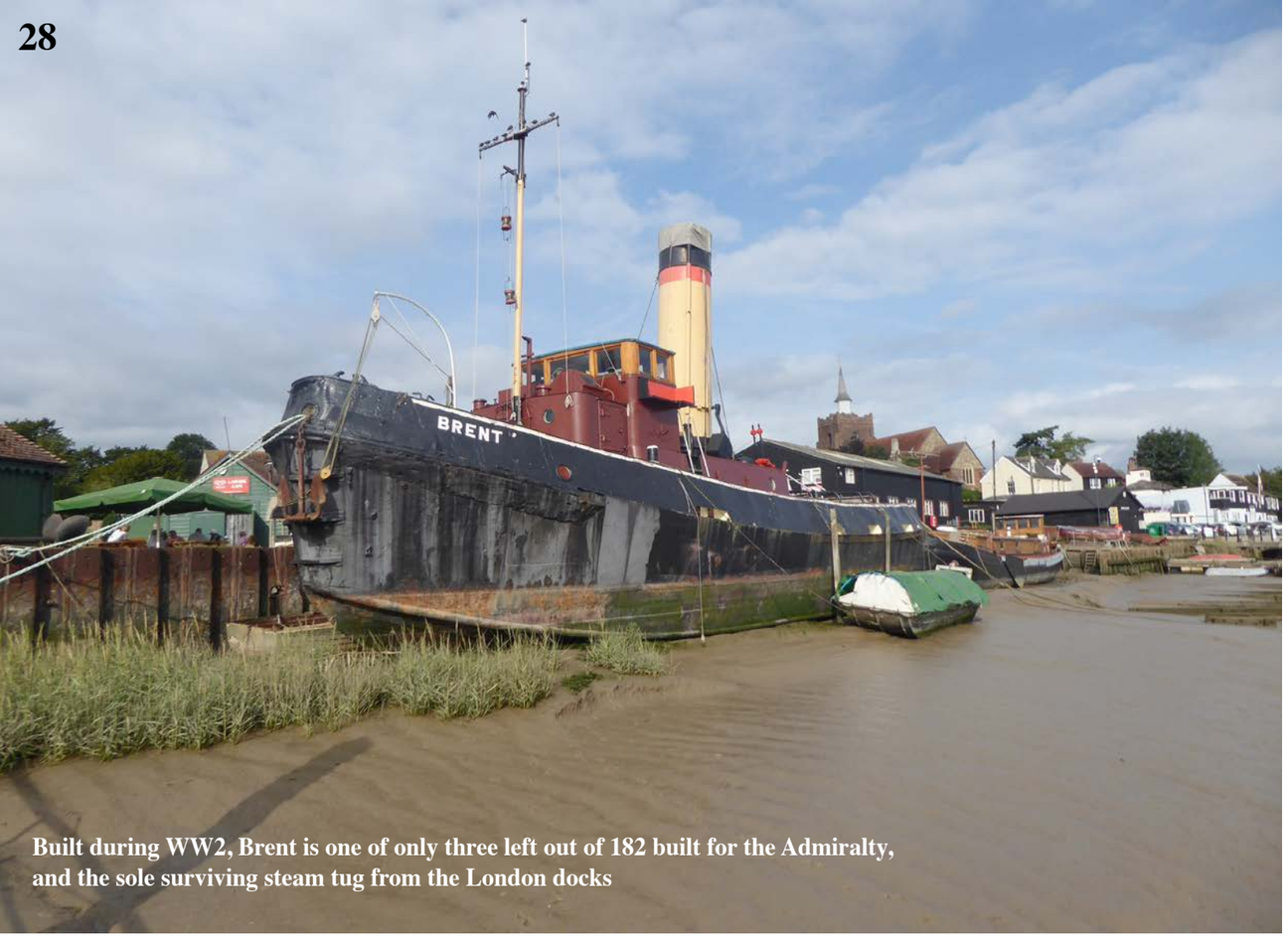
As with so many aspects of current life, the costs of re-establishing and preserving heritage have risen more than we should wish, and the competitors for donated funds and audiences has become acute.

The aim and goals of the Maritime Heritage Trust are:

The Maritime Heritage Trust aims to make more people aware of, care for and share our rich maritime heritage in all its dimensions– physical, cultural, social and environmental.

To help engage more people of all ages and backgrounds with the wider maritime heritage in the UK, through working closely with National Historic Ships UK and other maritime heritage partners, through promotion, education and fund-raising initiatives and through initiatives such as webinars, crowdfunding visit and events;

To help develop the Heritage Harbours initiative with local partners and projects, working with National Historic Ships and Historic England so as to better connect vessels and harbour facilities with local communities, archaeology, buildings and environment, cultural heritage including art and photographic records, and to strengthen support for and improve conservation of this heritage, locally and nationally;



Built during WW2, Brent is one of only three left out of 182 built for the Admiralty, and the sole surviving steam tug from the London docks

To engage with environmental and sustainability challenges and opportunities for the wider maritime heritage for example by encouraging sail cargo, developing greener fuels for powered vessels, identifying and planning for local climate change impacts, supporting skills and marine heritage learning and highlighting the health and wellbeing benefits of maritime heritage;

To support and represent MHT members on specific issues for example in relation to regulation on mooring of vessels or planning issues affecting harbour facilities, to pass on advice from collective experience of maritime heritage projects, to support innovation across the sector and to help represent the interests and concerns of UK maritime heritage at both European and global level.

To continue supporting the work of European Maritime Heritage

This task is not age specific – the age of the vessels and location should not reflect the age of the volunteers. More people of all ages and backgrounds and needed within the wider maritime heritage in the UK, through working closely with National Historic Ships UK and others, through promotion, education and fund-raising initiatives and through initiatives such as webinars, crowdfunding visits and events.

Since its establishment, it has been the lead source of energy behind the Heritage Harbours initiative with local partners and projects, working with National Historic Ships and Historic England to better connect vessels and harbour facilities with local communities, archaeology, buildings and environment, cultural heritage including art and photographic records, and to strengthen support for and improve conservation of this heritage, locally and nationally.

Two new Heritage Harbours came on board in late September 2024, to bring the number of active HH to 14. MHT is now establishing the initiative with its own HH Board and terms of reference, with Gloucester and Ramsgate joining Bideford, Bristol, Buckler's Hard, Chester, Exeter, Faversham and Oare Creeks, Ipswich, Maldon and Heybridge, Sandwich, Shardlow, Stourport, and Wells next the Sea in the Heritage Harbours National Working Group. You may notice there is no distinction between inland and sea facing HH. The first meeting of this semi-autonomous group has now taken place; the addition of an HH "Whats App" group has made a big difference to communication.

The MHT has recently engaged funds on a project to explore how it can create a template for organisations, most specifically to help schools and young people organisations engage with environmental and sustainability challenges and opportunities for the wider maritime heritage for example by encouraging sail cargo, developing greener fuels for powered vessels, identifying and planning for local climate change impacts, supporting skills and marine heritage learning and highlighting the health and wellbeing benefits of maritime heritage. The project has introduced a target group of school children to "Shieldhall" (see picture) and to a North Wales shrimper. It is developing a core guidance route

The point of a membership based organisation is not only financial, but to help with specific issues in relation to regulation on mooring of vessels or planning issues affecting harbour facilities, to pass on advice from collective experience of maritime heritage projects, to support innovation across the sector and to help represent the interests and concerns of UK maritime heritage at both European and global level. You can see from the breadth of the membership listed that such help can take a variety of directions. The cost and complexity of returning heritage vessels to both working order and engagement with the public is rising, both through resources and regulation. Heritage Harbours are a key enabler in this arena to bring in more public engagement.

There is plenty to do. It will not have escaped visitors to the website, that the MHT has predominantly a 'large' vessel; it is a fact of life that it is slightly easier for larger vessels to generate recognition and audiences, and thus financial and grant aid. However, you might also scroll down the members and find one racing dinghy association, flying the flag for small vessels everywhere. MHT is committed to ensuring that every Heritage Harbour should have a 'heritage' fleet of some sort. HH does not wish to be merely a silent, look and leave objective, but would like to see year round activity on and off the water. There are "heritage" fleets all around the UK. St Mawes One Designs, Blackwater One-Designs, Broads One-Designs, Gareloch One Designs, Fairy One-Designs (NI) to name a few; we hope that we can grow the depth of attachment as well as the breadth.

No boundaries – inland harbours are still 'harbours'. It should not be forgotten that there is a continued need to support the work of European Maritime Heritage organisations. Brexit has not made this any easier, but MHT remains a participant in forums and events.

Norfolk's Wells-Next-The-Sea has been designed a Heritage Harbour. Wells-next-the-Sea is a port on the North Norfolk coast with a rich maritime history dating back to the 9th century, which has preserved its harbour heritage and still attracts a wide variety of vessels from all over the UK and Europe.

The Heritage Harbour project, launched by the Wells Harbour Commissioners (formed in 1663, celebrating their 360th anniversary) aims to maintain this special character.

There is plenty to do. It will not have escaped visitors to our website that the MHT has predominantly a 'large' vessel; it is a fact of life that it is slightly easier for larger vessels to generate recognition and audiences, and thus financial and grant aid. However, you might also scroll down the members and find one racing dinghy association, flying the flag for small vessels everywhere. MHT is committed to ensuring that every Heritage Harbour should have a 'heritage' fleet of some sort. HH does not wish to be merely a silent, look and leave objective, but would like to see year round activity on and off the water. There are "heritage" fleets all around the UK. St Mawes One Designs, Blackwater One-Designs, Broads One-Designs, Gareloch One Designs, Fairy One-Designs (NI) to name a few; we hope that we can grow the depth of attachment as well as the breadth.

If you know of a group of musicians, artists, photographers or writers associated with a particular 'harbour' – in addition to the vessels – then the MHT is a safe anchorage to gain new support and advice for development and engagement.

Words: John Evans, Trustee

The best view of the work is gained from the website at: https://maritimeheritage.org.uk

Support the Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust while you shop

As a charity, the Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust relies on a mix of fleet hire, grants, donations, legacies and everyday support from people who care about what happens here. While some supporters prefer to give directly, others are looking for quieter, more practical ways to help — ways that fit easily into daily life.

Easyfundraising offers exactly that.

By starting your online shopping through Easyfundraising, the retailers you already use donate a small percentage of what you spend to the Trust. You pay the same prices, shop in the same way, and nothing is added to your bill. **The donation comes from the retailer, not from you.**

It is a straightforward arrangement that suits supporters who want to help regularly without making repeated donation decisions. Over time, these small contributions add up, helping to support our education programmes, boat maintenance and opportunities for young people to experience sailing and maritime heritage.

> *"I recently bought a National Trust Life Membership for a grand-child and they gave a £120 donation to the Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust... at no extra cost to me. Amazing"*
>
> *KT - May 2026*

There is no catch, no obligation, and no change to your shopping habits — just a quiet way to support work you already value.

Small actions, taken often, can make a real difference.

How it works

1. Start your shop through Easyfundraising
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2. Shop as normal
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3. Retailers donate to the Trust
Once your purchase is complete, the retailer makes a donation to support the Trust's work.

A simple way to help keep Hunter's Yard, the fleet, and our education work afloat — ***without changing how or where you shop or spending a penny more.***

Scan or click the QR code to find out more or get started @ **easyfundraising.org.uk**
Search for:
Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust

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Hunter's Yard is home to 22 classic 1930s mahogany yachts, renowned for their fast sailing performance and for their comfort as homes on the water. Our cabin yachts are available with 2-4 berths, electric inboards, and everything else you need for a great holiday.

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